

**§ 209.323 Initial decision.**

(a) The presiding officer shall prepare an initial decision after the closing of the record. The initial decision may dismiss the notice of proposed disqualification, in whole or in part, sustain the charges and proposed disqualification, or sustain the charges and mitigate the proposed disqualification.

(b) If the presiding officer sustains the charges and the proposed disqualification, dismisses some of the charges, or mitigates the proposed disqualification, the presiding officer shall issue and serve an appropriate order disqualifying respondent from engaging in the safety-sensitive functions described in § 209.303. If the presiding officer dismisses all of the charges set forth in notice of proposed disqualification, a dismissal order shall be issued and served.

(c) Each initial decision shall contain:

(1) Findings of fact and conclusions of law, as well as the reasons or bases therefor, upon all the material issues of fact and law presented on the record;

(2) An order, as described in paragraph (b) of this section;

(3) The dates any disqualification is to begin and end and other conditions, if any, that the respondent must satisfy before the disqualification order is discharged;

(4) The date upon which the decision will become final, as prescribed in § 209.325; and

(5) Notice of the parties' appeal rights, as prescribed in § 209.327.

(d) The decision shall be served upon the FRA Chief Counsel and the respondent. The Chief Counsel shall provide a copy of the disqualification order to the railroad by which the respondent is employed.

**§ 209.325 Finality of decision.**

(a) The initial decision of the presiding officer shall become final 35 days after issuance. Such decisions are not precedent.

(b) *Exception.* The initial decision shall not become final if, within 35 days after issuance of the decision, any party files an appeal under § 209.327. The timely filing of such an appeal shall stay the order in the initial decision.

**§ 209.327 Appeal.**

(a) Any party aggrieved by an initial decision issued under § 209.323 may file an appeal. The appeal must be filed within 35 days of issuance of the initial decision with the Federal Railroad Administrator, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590. A copy of the appeal shall be served on each party. The appeal shall set forth objections to the initial decision, supported by reference to applicable laws and regulations, and with specific reference to the record. If the Administrator has played any role in investigating, prosecuting, or deciding to prosecute the particular case, the Administrator shall recuse him or herself and delegate his or her authority under this section to a person not so involved.

(b) A party may file a reply to an appeal within 25 days of service of the appeal. If the party relies on evidence contained in the record for the reply, the party shall specifically refer to the pertinent evidence in the record.

(c) The Administrator may extend the period for filing an appeal or a response for good cause shown, provided the written request for extension is served before the expiration of the applicable period provided in paragraph (c) or (d) of this section.

(d) The Administrator has sole discretion to permit oral argument on the appeal. On the Administrator's own initiative or upon written motion by any party, the Administrator may determine that oral argument will contribute substantially to the development of the issues on appeal and may grant the parties an opportunity for oral argument.

(e) The Administrator may affirm, reverse, alter, or modify the decision of the presiding officer, or may remand the case for further proceedings before the presiding officer. The Administrator shall inform the parties and the presiding officer of his or her decision.

(f) The decision of the Administrator is final, constitutes final agency action, and is not subject to further administrative review.

**§ 209.329 Assessment considerations.**

(a) Proof of a respondent's willful violation of one of the requirements of parts 213 through 236 (excluding parts

225, 228, and 233) of this title establishes a rebuttable presumption that the respondent is unfit to perform the safety-sensitive functions described in § 209.303. Where such presumption arises, the respondent has the burden of establishing that, taking account of the factors in paragraph (b) of this section, he or she is fit to perform the foregoing safety-sensitive functions for the period and under the other conditions, if any, proposed in the notice of proposed disqualification.

(b) In determining respondent's lack of fitness to perform safety-sensitive functions and the duration and other conditions, if any, of appropriate disqualification orders under §§ 209.309, 209.323, and 209.327, the factors to be considered, to the extent: Each is pertinent to the respondent's case, include but are not limited to the following:

(1) The nature and circumstances of the violation, including whether the violation was intentional, technical, or inadvertent, was committed willfully, or was frequently repeated;

(2) The adverse impact or the potentially adverse impact of the violation on the health and safety of persons and the safety of property;

(3) The railroad's operating rules, safety rules, and repair and maintenance standards;

(4) Repair and maintenance standards adopted by the industry;

(5) The consistency of the conditions of the proposed disqualification with disqualification orders issued against other employees for the same or similar violations;

(6) Whether the respondent was on notice of any safety regulations that were violated or whether the respondent had been warned about the conduct in question;

(7) The respondent's past record of committing violations of safety regulations, including previous FRA warnings issued, disqualifications imposed, civil penalties assessed, railroad disciplinary actions, and criminal convictions therefor;

(8) The civil penalty scheduled for the violation of the safety regulation in question;

(9) Mitigating circumstances surrounding the violation, such as the existence of an emergency situation en-

dangering persons or property and the need for the respondent to take immediate action; and

(10) Such other factors as may be warranted in the public interest.

#### **§ 209.331 Enforcement of disqualification order.**

(a) A railroad that employs or formerly employed an individual serving under a disqualification order shall inform prospective or actual employers of the terms and conditions of the order upon receiving notice that the disqualified employee is being considered for employment with or is employed by another railroad to perform any of the safety-sensitive functions described in § 209.303.

(b) A railroad that is considering hiring an individual to perform the safety-sensitive functions described in § 209.303 shall ascertain from the individual's previous employer, if such employer was a railroad, whether the individual is subject to a disqualification order.

(c) An individual subject to a disqualification order shall inform his or her employer of the order and provide a copy thereof within 5 days after receipt of the order. Such an individual shall likewise inform any prospective employer who is considering hiring the individual to perform any of the safety-sensitive functions described in § 209.303 of the order and provide a copy thereof within 5 days after receipt of the order or upon application for the position, whichever first occurs.

#### **§ 209.333 Prohibitions.**

(a) An individual subject to a disqualification order shall not work for any railroad in any manner inconsistent with the order.

(b) A railroad shall not employ any individual subject to a disqualification order in any manner inconsistent with the order.

#### **§ 209.335 Penalties.**

(a) Any individual who violates § 209.331(c) or § 209.333(a) may be permanently disqualified from performing the safety-sensitive functions described in § 209.303. Any individual who willfully violates § 209.331(c) or § 209.333(a) may also be assessed a civil penalty of